

Maritime Sector Information Sharing Meeting
Sponsored by: US Coast Guard and Department of Homeland
Security Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection
Directorate (DHS IAIP)

Draft Meeting Summary

After a brief welcome from Mike Lesnick of the Meridian Institute, facilitator for the meeting, Rear Admiral Larry Hereth, US Coast Guard (USCG), and Jim Caverly, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), provided context for the meeting. Admiral Hereth indicated that the US Coast Guard is an integral part of the US government's efforts to collect, analyze, and disseminate homeland security threat information relevant to maritime infrastructure. In this meeting, he indicated that the Coast Guard described its efforts in these areas and welcomes feedback from the maritime community. Mr. Caverly briefly described efforts underway to create a public-private partnership for sector coordination that focuses on protection of critical infrastructure sectors. This meeting focused on describing new sector coordinating entities that may be appropriate to foster such relationships between the federal government and private maritime sector.

Intelligence Gathering and Information Sharing

Lt. Cmdr. Kevin Wirth provided a brief overview of the Intelligence Community (IC) and Intelligence Cycle. The USCG, as part of the intelligence community, is focused on potential threats to maritime interests. As a regulatory and military branch the USCG analyzes both law enforcement and foreign intelligence information to protect the maritime infrastructure, vessels and crews across sector components.

The USCG works with the fourteen other members of the IC, DHS partner agencies such as Customs and Border Patrol and the Transportation Security Administration, the National Response Center (NRC), and state and local entities to gather and assess data regarding potential maritime threats. DHS passes credible information to sector interests as advisories for specific threats or bulletins for awareness of potential threats. The USCG intelligence program created twenty-nine field intelligence support teams, two intelligence fusion centers, and nearly doubled in size since 9/11. The Coast Guard Intelligence Coordination Center, as a partner with the US Navy at the National Maritime Intelligence Center (NMIC) analyze information fed from regional and field resources to connect information between regional and national information centers. DHS passes credible information to sector interests as advisories for specific threats or bulletins for awareness of potential threats.

Information Sharing Functions

Lt. Kenneth Washington described the information flow between the DHS and the maritime sector. Information flows from the Maritime Industry into the NRC as regulated by MTSA. The NRC then sends this information to the Department of Homeland Security Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection Directorate (DHS IAIP). This information is analyzed and compared with information received from other sources to develop Threat Warning Products. These Threat Warning Products are then sent from DHS IAIP to the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard then shares this information with the maritime industry. The key to this information flow is the use of the Coast Guard's Area Maritime Security Committees (AMSC) in each port. The Committee's are made up of

local area maritime industry members who work with the local Coast Guard Captain of the Port (COTP) to discuss homeland security issues. These AMSC's share this information with local port exchanges, industry, facilities, and other local stakeholders to whom this information is vital to the protection of the local maritime infrastructure. As well as encourage these same stakeholders to continue to report suspicious activity to the NRC.

Cmdr. Cynthia Stowe discussed the USCG's means of managing sensitive but unclassified information. FOUO (For Official Use Only) and SSI (Sensitive Security Information) designations are the most frequently used by the USCG. SSI information is not subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or state sunshine laws. Because SSI is exempt from FOIA, it is viewed as necessary in order to effectively share confidential security information between sector owners and operators and governmental agencies in discussing threats to infrastructure.

Handling classified data becomes extremely important in information sharing. Over 600 security clearances have been issued to port personnel who will aid in reviewing sensitive threat data and providing information to DHS, USCG, and other entities about threats. The USCG recognizes a need to train those personnel at the port level on the obligations involved in handling classified information. Cmdr. Stowe expressed the importance of having agents within the various ports throughout the country sharing information with federal entities.

Lt. Washington followed with a briefing on the America's Waterway Watch program. The program is part of USCG's public outreach effort to encourage citizens to report suspicious activity in our nation's waterways. Currently the USCG has established 34 local waterways watch programs. Citizens can report information directly to a toll-free number at the NRC, which then forwards this data onto the appropriate government agencies for analysis.

Sector Coordinating Council

After a short break, Jim Caverly discussed maritime sector coordination. Mr. Caverly described the evolution of efforts in recent years to create structures that promote a public-private partnership for critical infrastructure sector coordination. This coordination has evolved from the establishment of sector coordinators, who were individuals appointed by cabinet-level agencies to set priorities for each sector, to the development of sector coordinating councils. These Sector coordinating councils are self-organizing groups intended to ensure sector coordination, particularly establishing sector priorities and interacting with the government on homeland security issues. These entities would have the advantage of not being subject to public venue laws, since the new councils were not organized by the federal government. The concept of the Sector Coordinating Council (SCC) provides such a framework to provide a forum for discrete maritime interests to share information freely on potential threats.

Mr. Caverly provided the example of the Food and Agriculture Sector Coordinating Council (FASCC). The FASCC facilitates communications, plans and activities within the Food and Agriculture sector and with other relevant infrastructure sectors, government entities, and others necessary to further secure the nation's food supply and critical infrastructure. The FASCC is comprised of seven Sub-Councils, each representing a critical element of the food and agriculture infrastructure. Two representatives and one alternate from each Sub-Council sit on the FASCC, and this

group coordinates with its government counterpart for the sector, the Government Coordinating Council. Together, the two entities will share and assess threat data develop advisories and bulletins for the sector. The two entities will also consider preventative measures for owners and operators in the sector to shore up vulnerabilities, and will develop mitigation strategies in the event of an attack on the nation's food supply.

Technological Improvements to Foster Information Sharing

Homeland Security Information Network

Mr. Caverly discussed the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN), which is a highly secure network over the Internet that allows the sharing of non-classified information in real time with interested parties across the country. HSIN will permit vertical communication throughout a critical sector and will also enable horizontal communication across sectors and through communities of interest. This capability will provide the connectivity within and across sectors that is important to generating information and knowledge critical to protection infrastructure. Ultimately, HSIN will enable threat product dissemination and facilitate collaboration through real-time dialogue within and across sectors and communities.

The main goal of HSIN will be to provide the tactical, structural arrangement for threat information to flow freely. DHS is employing a partnership model in the development of the network, and will provide planning and logistics for use of the HSIN network tailored to sector needs. The expertise and talent within the sectors will provide the strategic information sharing functions. HSIN will be available in all fifty states and in major cities by the end of 2004. A secret-level network is targeted for availability in early 2005.

Homeport

Lt. Scott Masterson described the Coast Guard Homeport information system. This system is the first step of a consolidation of all USCG web-based and electronic information into one location. Homeport would include plan management information on vessels, facilities, and area activities, and allow for collaboration between area committees. Homeport includes CG Portal Technology that will promote system connectivity by linking the various maritime sector interests to information from external entities; for instance, Homeport planners intend to provide SSI-classified information on the website, not only focusing on ports, but also involving USCG headquarters, regional information gathering centers, and other interests. The system is currently under development and should be piloted in late 2004.

Several participants were encouraged by the development of Homeport, noting that the information system would bring together many discrete web functions and make important information, such as plan management information, available to the sector. There was some concern that Homeport and HSIN may be redundant. Mr. Caverly assured the group that the two systems will complement each other. He stated that the HSIN system could plug directly into Homeport, providing an additional source of information to the USCG system and potentially reducing redundancies, rather than exacerbating them. Sector participants felt that with that assurance, the linking of HSIN and Homeport could be beneficial to the maritime sector and should be further explored.

Discussion of Proposed Sector Council

In addition to exploring the technological synergies between HSIN and Homeport, the meeting participants discussed the idea of creating a Sector Coordinating Council (SCC) for the maritime sector. The sentiment of the participants was to explore this idea, with the following caveats:

- 1) Understand Other Options. While a number of participants expressed an interest in establishing a SCC, many indicated that they would need to explore the relationship between the SCC's role and the federal requirement to establish a National Maritime Security Advisory Committee.
- 2) Self-Organization. There was some question as to how self-organization of a SCC would take place. Participants asked how other sectors self-organized and agreed that a group of maritime sector representatives would have to come forward to establish initial processes and structures, convene meetings, and coordinate communications. DHS may be able to provide some logistical support, but the organizing would have to be done by the sector. The Meridian Institute helped support the organizing efforts of the Food and Agriculture sector, and may be able to do the same in this case.
- 3) No Additional Transaction Costs. Participants strongly suggested that a system that creates additional transaction costs would be difficult to support. Potential organizers of such a system such work to avoid high transaction costs in the establishment of any sector coordination entity.
- 4) Involving Sector Participants. Some participants expressed a need to involve a broader group of interests than those present at the meeting. For example, labor interests were mentioned as underrepresented at the meeting. Also, participants noted that any coordinating activity would need to consider mechanisms for those sector interests that cannot travel to Washington for meetings to be involved in discussions.

Next Steps

- 1) The USCG will make electronically available presentations from the meeting. Meridian Institute staff will prepare a brief summary of the meeting as well that will be provided to meeting attendees and available electronically.
- 2) A participants list will be developed and provided.
- 3) Participants agreed that another meeting should be held in the near future to further explore the idea of creating a sector coordinating council. Meridian staff will work with the USCG to identify the best time and place for such a meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 pm.

For information on this meeting, including participants and presentations, please visit the following site: http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/mp/news_events.shtml.